



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: January 1 to March 31, 2005

**ZIMBABWE: SUPPORT TO ZIMBABWEAN CITIZENS (03838)
USAID Cooperative Agreement No.: DGC-A-00-01-0004-00**

**Project Dates: April 1, 2003 to February 28, 2005
Total Budget: \$547,136.00 Expenses to date: \$547,136.00**

I. SUMMARY

Genuine, democratic elections in accordance with regional and international standards remain the best hope for resolving the political crisis in Zimbabwe. Since 2003, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has been implementing a program NDI to promote “free and fair” electoral practices in Zimbabwe. Through this initiative NDI has supported Zimbabwean efforts to draft new election legislation, promote greater awareness about the political situation in the country and prepare civic organizations to monitor elections.

This quarter, NDI completed activities under its leader award and continued its work in Zimbabwe under a follow-on associate cooperative agreement. No significant programmatic activities took place this quarter under this agreement; NDI conducted close-out activities and worked on drafting a final report, which will be submitted next reporting period.

On March 31, parliamentary elections were held that failed to meet the new Southern African Development Community (SADC) election standards. For information on NDI activities in Zimbabwe, please refer to the January to March 2005 quarterly report for USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 690-A-00-05-00023-00.

II. BACKGROUND

Political Context

Zimbabwe held parliamentary elections on March 31, 2005. Seventy-eight of the 120 elected seats were awarded to the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party, while the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the official opposition, was awarded 41 seats and one seat was awarded to an independent candidate, Jonathan Moyo (formerly ZANU-PF’s minister of Information). The MDC has filed official complaints challenging the results in 13 of the 78 constituencies won by ZANU-PF, citing irregularities in the elections.

Domestic observers, organized by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), strongly criticized the pre-election climate within which the elections took place and the legal framework for elections. Further, they raised concerns about the number of voters turned away from polling stations and not permitted to vote as well as the lack of transparency in the tabulation of results. Most worrying were discrepancies between the turnout figures initially announced by the election officials and the final results. In approximately 30 constituencies, the number of votes cast, as officially announced, exceeded the official turnout figures by up to 10,000 votes.

All of the international groups accredited by the government gave their approval to the election. While most refrained from stating that the elections were “free and fair” and they did note some shortcomings, these groups ultimately concluded that the elections reflected the will of the Zimbabwean people. However, the government was very selective in who it accredited to observe the elections. Organizations from the United States and the United Kingdom were not permitted to observe the elections, and the Commonwealth and the EU were not accredited. Further, regional groups such as SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) and Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) did not receive invitations. All of these groups in the past have been critical of the conduct of elections in Zimbabwe.

During the run-up to the elections, the government enacted two major pieces of legislation reforming Zimbabwe’s electoral framework. One bill created a new independent election commission, the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC), to oversee the conduct of elections. However, this legislation did not achieve its stated goals in two important respects. First, the commission that was created is independent in name only. Second, and equally troubling, important aspects of the electoral process remain outside the responsibility of the new election commission. Most notably, the registration of voters, which was extremely problematic and led to more than 130,000 voters being turned away on the March 31 election date according to election officials themselves, remains the responsibility of the discredited Office of the Registrar General.

The second piece of legislation focuses more narrowly on changes to electoral practices. This law introduced some important reforms in line with the new SADC elections protocol (and the RESTORE! document), such as shifting from two days of voting to only one and changing the location of where ballots are counted from centralized counting centers to the polling stations themselves. While these reforms are significant they are not sufficient on their own to create the confidence needed for the election process to be seen as credible.

With respect to the political climate within which the elections took place, during the final weeks of the campaign there was a marked change in Zimbabwe. For the first time in five years all political parties were able to campaign across the country. In the past, ZANU-PF using both the state machinery and its supporters, has physically prevented opposition parties from traveling to rural communities. Violence, while not eliminated, was reduced across the country. While opposition parties continued to have to comply with the draconian Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and, on occasion, their election related events were broken up by police, overall, the police permitted opposition parties to campaign. However, reports of intimidation by ZANU-PF supporters remained widespread and it must be remembered that this brief new period

of openness comes against a five year government-orchestrated campaign of violence and intimidation against the MDC and its supporters.

NDI Program

NDI is working to promote “free and fair” electoral practices in Zimbabwe by providing technical assistance in three primary areas—outreach, domestic monitoring, and legislative drafting. The Institute’s specific objectives are the following:

- Develop legislation in accordance with regional and international standards for democratic elections;
- Increase international awareness about the political situation in Zimbabwe; and
- Strengthen the capacity of civic organizations to observe elections.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

This quarter, NDI completed activities under its leader award and continued its work in Zimbabwe under a follow-on associate cooperative agreement. No significant programmatic activities took place this quarter under this agreement. NDI efforts focused on conducting close-out activities and drafting a final report for the leader project, which will be submitted next reporting period.

On March 31, parliamentary elections were held that failed to meet the new Southern African Development Community (SADC) election standards. For information on NDI activities in Zimbabwe, please refer to the January to March 2005 quarterly report for USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 690-A-00-05-00023-00.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As no significant programmatic activities were conducted under this grant during this quarter, NDI has no results to report at this time.

V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

NDI will submit a final report for this cooperative agreement in the next quarter.